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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Better electricity benefits Maysan province

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MAYSAN, Iraq – In order to improve and strengthen the electrical network in the Maysan province the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently turned over the al-Kheer substation which will provide electricity to rural villages and towns deprived of electricity for a long time, he added.

Restoring Iraq's electrical infrastructure is going to take time because of the instability of its electrical grid and because long-term use without maintenance and repair under the former regime will require careful and thorough renovation, according to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers officials charged with the electrical reconstruction.

"We are working with the Iraqi government to improve the electrical system in all the Iraqi provinces and push the infrastructure wheel forward for a better quality of life for Iraq," said Barry Stuard, Maysan resident engineer with the Gulf Region South district. "The main reason we can't completely restore Iraq's electricity right now is the antiquated, outdated and dilapidated equipment along with sabotage that is prevalent here. This has been a big challenge to the Iraqis and the international efforts to restore full electricity production as it existed prior to 1991."

Stuard said that the $2.5 million substation is one of seven new substations in Maysan along with 22 others that USACE has built in the nine southern provinces.

"Much of the theft and vandalism attacks against power lines have made getting full electrical production impossible and have made some of the power plants shut down production," said Sgt.1st Class Harold Stewart, construction representative for Maysan.

Stuard said that Iraq's power grid, battered by attacks from insurgents and long-term neglect is still producing only half the electricity needed despite international efforts to rebuild it.

"The local population, the businesses – virtually everything - requires power for its computers to its manufacturing machinery," said Stewart. "The lack of power has prevented many things from improving and has added significantly to the unemployment rate in Iraq. We are trying to change that. The al-Kheer substation project is a contract to supply material, equipment and supervision necessary to supply, install and test a new substation."

Stewart explained that the director general of the Iraqi Ministry of Electricity submitted a request with guidelines to the Corps to build the 33/11 kilovolt al-Kheer substation with capacity of 2 x 31.5 MVA (MVA = volts times amps times 1000). "It is a transformer station with switchgear and ancillary equipment," he said. "This project was completed with a permanent structure to house all electrical components that would need protection from the weather conditions and an enclosed yard to protect other electrical components." Construction was completed after several delays such as weather and other common construction issues, he added.

Stuard said that this project has been turned over to the Ministry of Electricity and has been connected to a new set of electrical feeder lines to supply power to the citizens of al-Amarah for many years to come.

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